NUMBER 8

NEAR MINT

A FANZINE FOR STUDENTS FANS PROS COMIC BOOKS OLD MOVIES ART

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AN INTERVIEW WITH BURNE HOGARTH AND GIL KANE

$3

NEAR MINT

A FANZINE FOR STUDENTS FANS PROS COMIC BOOKS OLD MOVIES ART

AN AL DELLINGES PUBLICATION

NEAR MINT is a new magazine devoted to thoes who love good art, good old movies and good comic related stories, where ever they may be found. I grew up with comics and great films, most of which were produced in the late thirties and forties. In searching for material for this book, I've come accross tons of great features and articles that have been hidden too long. Our purpose is to share this entertainment with our readers and they can help by sharing thier long lost art related stories with us. If there's a memory of sorts, that brings a snicker or chuckle to the jaw line, send it along. If you send art work, please do not send originals, prints and good Xerox copies work just fine for reproductive purposes.

THE NEXT TWO ISSUES OF NEAR MINT

NO.
NEAR MINT
A FANZINE FOR STUDENTS FANS PROS COMIC BOOKS OLD MOVIES ART
NO.1 - WEREWOLF!
THIS ISSUE FEATURING BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
$3

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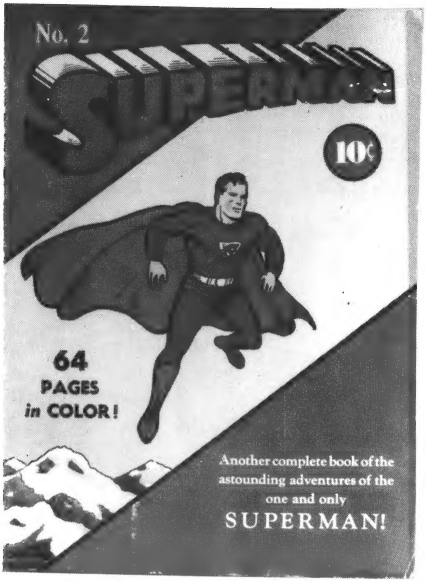
Once in a lifetime

The author of "The All Star Comics Revue", Craig Delich.

Collecting comics in 1980, particularly Golden Age Comics, is vastly different from when I began to collect them in 1959. At that time, there were fewer collectors and prices were what we would concider "give-away" at best. Having kept all of Jerry Bails' ' comicollectors' from the early 1960s, as well as lists from Claude Held and Frank Nussel (out of Chicago), it is easy to reflect back to see the "bargins" of the day: like Action Comics #2 selling for $5, along with Batman #1 and Superman #1 for the same price. Why, my near mint copy of Action Comics #1 only cost me $75 AND plenty of harsh words from my parents, who chipped in and loaned me to buy that treasured item!

I'm sure that if you have collected comics for any period of time, you've always wished that someway....somehow.... that golden opportunity would hit you and you would run across a vast collection of rare issues just lying around collecting dust in someone's attic or hidden away in a chest of drawers or in a basement. At todays current prices, that find would indeed be a dream come true.

Chances are, that dream has been shattered time and time again, and you've probably given up hope and pushed that dream back imto the dark, deep recesses of your mind, thinking that this only happens to other people.



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But dreams can come true and this once-in-a-lifetime chance came my way in the early months of 1980, long after I had given up hope of this happening to me. A good friend of mine, Mike Wileman, who is an avid Marvel Mystery Comics and Sub-Mariner collector that layed out my publication, "The All Star Comics Revue", called me and told me that a dealer-friend of ours in Grandview, Missouri, Randall Hawkins, had come across a large Golden Age Collection gathering dust in an attic. He wanted to know if we would like to come over and buy any of this material at "giveaway" prices. Our answer was obvious!

When we arrived at his place of business, two large stacks of mags confronted us. magazines dated 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939, im ner mint to mint shape! After putting my eyes back into their sockets, I asked him what the story was behind these gems. He said that the magazines were originally bought during those years and stored away....forgotten, until recently. The individual's son was given them and he promptly took them to the garage and threw them on the floor, not really being interested in them. There they layed, opened to the elements, until this boy contacted Mr. Hawkins and wanted to know if he wanted to buy them. He did. The prices paid cannot be revealed, but needless to say, it was 1959 all over again!

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ALL STAR COMICS REVUE

BY CRAIG DELICH

Everything you ever wanted to know about All Star Comics and more.

Eagerly, I went through the stacks very slowly and carefully, allowing myself to marvel at pristine beauty in its greatest splendor. Titles like New Adventure, More Fun, Superman, Detective, Mystery Men, Action and more passed my eyes, and I felt like a kid once more with a new found toy. That day I walked home with many of these treasures under my arm: issues like Adventure #44, Superman #2, and Action #6 and #7. Others like Detective #28, remained behind.....sadly.

For me, my impossible dream HAD come true, and I feel very fortunate. But even if this dream had never been realized, comic fandom has been good to me and that is a treasure more valuable than any DREAM in the world.

Editor's note;

Craig Delich was born and raised in Kansas City, Kansas, and is the author of the widely acclaimed fanzine, THE ALL-STAR COMICS REVUE, which he is holding in the photo of him on the first page of this article. Also pictured are three of his favorite magazines: Green Lantern #1, Detective #31 and Action Comics #20.

Rap with Ray

Hopefully "NEAR MINT" is thriving and still being published by the time this article comes up for print. Tell any friends that are comic or art orientated to subscribe and keep Al's presses hot.

The song, Summertime, and the living is easy, must be making referral to inhabitants dwelling at the North Pole. As hot as it's been, easy could be replaced with another four letter word.

In last article I briefly discussed Planet Comics. Thoes of you that take the T.B.G. may have noticed various ads of these comics for sale from time to time. In a recent ad, a Planet Comics No. 60 for sale at something like $55.00 caught my eye. I suppose that if someone needs this issue to fill a run, they'll buy. I wont make any comments on the comics worth as like everything else collected, price and value is decided by rarity, condition, and demand. In my case, you would also have to add, that I would have to be a millionaire, which I am not. Pauper is a better word to describe my status with todays prices of everything.

As for the good girl art, I would think it cheaper to buy a girlie mag. and draw from it, creating your own style. However, if you do want to draw from this particular comic-line, Al has reprinted a book of various stories from Planet Comics @ $3.50, the old sell, eh?, you're probably saying. Yes and no. If you have no interest in Planet Comics, and are familiar with them, no, but, if you're curious, or wish some of the art to use for a model, and do not have any of the originals, why pay high prices for the originals just to use? But that's up to you.

BUCK ROGER'S fans, attention. Comic Enterprises, P.O. Box 12, Buffalo, N.Y., 14205, first edition of "All Rare" #1 features various B.R. strips, original story from Amazing's , movie stills, toys, comics & L.B.L.s, advs., indexing and price quotes. Very good, though prices are slightly exagerated. "All Rare" is 5 bucks plus 1 buck postage. BUCK ROGERS was and is my favorite comic strip, I was, nuts about that strip as far back as I can remember. Don't know why it made such an impression on me, but still can't get enough of the old original Buck Roger,s strips.

T.B.G. # 349 has a good article by Terry Beatty, "Sideways". I agree with the entire article other than only partially Black Stallion and Action #1. But when it came to super heros, I was more of a Capt. Marvel fan.

Read lately in T.B.G. that W.S.A. is at odds. Considered joining a while back but changed my mind, a person is no better than their word when selling and or buying. Occassionally I read letters from disgruntled collectors dissatisfied with purchase made. Fortunately, and truthfully, I can say that I have no complaints. Once or twice over the years I've bought comics listed as "Mint", that actually were only "Good", but on the other hand, I've gotten books in much better shape than I expected. Five years ago, I lacked Jungle #2 to fill a run, a dealer up north in another country advertised this book in two conditions, "V.G." at $60 and "Fine" at $80. I immeadiately phoned him and asked for a discription in detail, as I don't have $20 to toss around needlessly. I told him I wanted the cheaper one and that I'd send a check. He asked if I had a W.S.A. number and I told him no. He said, "How do I know if your check is any good?" I said, "if that were the case, I'd buy the more expensive one". He laughed, and assured me he would hold the comic, and I sent the check, shortly there-after, with out allowing time for the check to clear, I received the book, and to this day, I'm sure he sent me the better comic.

It's dealers like that, that make collection a true joy. I have found that there aren't too many collectors gathered in close areas (anyway, in mine), so I would estimate that for every 2 or 300 people, only one or two are collectors. Still that comes out to quite a few over-all. But I do want to stress one consistent thing that I have found about comic oriented people over the years. They are all a great bunch of people, and you will never find a more overall bunch of honest people in the world. Sure, there are speculators out to make a fast buck, and then there are the con-artists that adv. with a P.O. # , take your money and skip. However, I fear that you will find the conmen (or women) in anything where there is money to be made by fleecing the unsuspecting. I could go into detail dealing with real estate and insurance in past years that yours truly fell into with eyes wide open. But I'd rather not discuss my stupidity in detail, so will pass.

Read the Penthouse movie and book reviews for forthcoming movies of our near future, and if as say, I for one will be sadly disappointed. June issue, I think. Read both June and July at work (while taking a break to try and catch my breath, in case anyone that works there happens to read this), as can,t see paying out the money they cost these days, unless they contain art work by good comic related artists, or articles on the pulps or comics. Back last year, two of the magazines of the girlie genre featured several pages of art by Frazetta in one, and Boris in another, all in beautiful color.

If I ever get to sounding too cynical or like a critic , write and let me know.

The Comic Reader seems to put out everything a collector of todays comic books would want to know about who does what. Really thorough. Used to be The Menomonee Falls Gazette. I sure hated to see those publishers (they and Alan Light) discontinue their comic strip newspapers. They reprinted great stuff.

I don,t buy any of the late comics anymore, as I must confess that it just doesn,t interest me now. I,ve talked to other collectors my age, and find that I am not alone, Perhaps we,re just growing too old to appreciate this modern stuff?

Another thing that never ceases to amaze me are the adv.s of comics. If they have what is considered to be an issue concerning DOPE, or have a BONDAGE cover, ridiculous prices are asked. Why? Any newspaper or newscast has all sorts of stories about Dope. Bondage magazines are for sale openly on the newsstands that handle large varieties of adult magazines , if one is foolish enough to buy them. So whats the big deal about them? Someone enlighten me on this please.

As for Wertham,s " Seduction of The Innocents" book,the man was totally insane in my estimation. The simple and logical reasoning that the comics went to the sexy girl illustrations is that they had; (1) Run out of good story material, (2) Children were becoming enlightened about sex at an earlier age, and not content with the old fashioned way of morality, (3) and most important, they (the publishers) were trying to continue selling comics.

Talk about what is often referred to as good girl art, Dick Calkins of Buck Rogers fame drew some of the best that I ever saw. And this was back in the 30's ! Sometime, perhaps I can get Al to reprint a few frames in "Near Mint".

But on the other hand, look at some of the costumed illustrations of men in the comics. They look as if their suits were painted on,and they actually had little more than a jock strap. Muscle's covering their bodies. In highschool I played football and inter-scholastic wrestling, and afterwards went for semi-pro boxing, but never had muscles like that on my best day in my best condition.

Something else to ponder. It looks good on paper, but in their best day the best man could not overpower 4-6 good thugs as depicted in comics. As a kid when playing super hero, I received some terrible beatings just trying.

During WW2, we had a converted C.C.C. camp converted into a war prison camp for Italian and German prisoners. With an airplane lace boots, boot pants, a T-shirt with crayon diamond on chest, and one of my mothers largest dish towels, I'd head my scooter down the road as Spy Smasher, but never found any spies. As for the prisoners outside of the town in the camp, their biggest concern seemed to be escaping just long enough to run to town and buy liquor.

After the war ended, the majority migrated over and settled in the area.

The most disheartening part of playing hero was that all of the other kids immediately saw through your disguise. That never happened in thecomics or in the movies. Being but a dumb hick farm boy, it took me some years to figure this one out. The way some carry on today, I can't help but have doubts that they've made my discovery yet.

Last Sunday I finally managed to pay Fred Whitledge a long over due visit. I took my recently acquired Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (through a book club) to loan for Fred to read data concerning Bill Crawford. As usual, he already had the volume. I had an enjoyable chat with Fred, then returned home.

To describe Fred, you could cover numerous hobbies of various types over the years, and if well familiar with his backround, know of his past affiliations with comics, pulps, authors, artists, etc. Fred put out various fanzines, one of Faust (Max Brand) , Hitching Rail (Post), and various others, plus indexes. During the last 10-15 years or so, he's been working on indexing all western stories and authors of the pulps up to 60's, possibly later. He's done LouieL' Amour, but then that at present time cannot be considered complete, as long as Louie keeps writing.

In mid sixties, Fred had (if not the largest) one of the largest collections of Fantasy and Science Fiction pulps. He wasn't exactly low on Dectective and Western either.

Fred is a teacher (High School, formerly H.S. and College) that could retire if he wanted to, but enjoys keeping extremely active. During our conversation, I asked him where he was Dec. 7, 1941, and this is what he told me.

Fred was attending Oklahoma A&M, housed in a dormitory converted out of a former C. C. Camp. A group of them were playing poker, when the music on the radio was interrupted by an announcer exclaiming that the U.S. was at war! "Turn on another station. They're trying another War of The Worlds stunt", was they're reaction. After hearing the announcement repeated continuously, they finally were convinced that the U.S. was indeed at war. That night, the father of two brothers called long distance and told them to go down the next day and join the Marine Corps. Without a word of argument, the brothers did as ordered the following day. Fred himself served in the armed forces. Whether right at that time or later, I never asked.

Fred called me a few weeks earlier, but I just happened to be out, this fellow named Steranko was in town to check through some detective pulps for time period art work.

The book, "Shadow Duende" received good reviews from Gallery (Men's Magazine), October issue!

Wally Wood's new adult book, Gang Bang was advertised in September issue of High Society. He has always been one of my favorite artist's, and wish he'd do more "Dynamo," his best comic hero strip.

Marvel & D.C. still shifting titles around, discontinuing, adding, abridging, etc. Neither one has put out a good comic worthwhile in last few years., (in my personal estimation), other than perhaps reprints and Spider Woman (Marvel). Can you imagine what would happen to sales if they'd use their (unused) intelligence and come out with reprints of comics from first exactly as they were? The same for all of the Dell titles, etc. As simple as this is to figure out, the ones in charge of publishing give me cause to wonder!?!

Enough for now. If you don't see your letter answered (if worthwhile) right off, please remember that am writing these articles approximately 3 issues ahead. If you agree with what I write or disagree, even to the point of taking offense, drop me a line and let me know. When you reach my age, even if the only attention you get is someone giving you hell, that still beats nothing!
Bye, till next issue.

RAY-

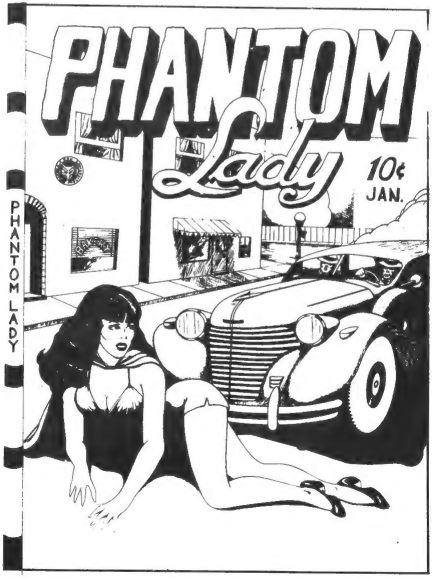
SZUKALSKI

"Troughful of Pearls"
Get this book while you can,
from Glenn Bray, PO Box 44
82, Sylmar, CA. 91342

More on this fantastic book
next issue.

Roger Hall

MEET ROGER HALL



ROGER HALL, like many of us, is a Golden Age Comics fan whos intrests lie mainly with Fox Comics, Matt Baker and any of the "good girl" art stuff, including Phantom Lady, Sheena and South Sea Girl.

Roger has several thousand comics from the sixties and seventies in his collection, all Marvels. He doesn't go for the DC line, as he puts it, "those heros were just too infallible, forinstance, Superman's only problem was figuring out who to hit, and when it comes to his only weekness, Kryptonite, all his enemies seem to have it.

Now, Spider Man was another matter, up until they killed Gwen Stacy, I bought the mag faithfully, but with that issue, my addiction to buying comics was broken. Now, I am more selective and buy only the issues that appear to have decent art.

Phantom Lady art copy/ Roger Hall

Roger Hall art

Some of Roger's other favorites include Will Eisner's Spirit, early Archie and Disney, Frazetta, Li'l Abner, Wally Wood, E.C. Horror Comics, and books by Burroughs, Robert E. Howard and H.P. Lovecraft.

NEAR MINT is pleased to print some of Roger's art work in this issue, we hope you will agree, we think he is a very talented fellow.

Capt. America art copy/ Roger Hall

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WHERE WERE YOU

DECEMBER 7

1941

Editors note;

This feature welcomes articles from all thoes who remember where they were on this famous day of infamy.

Where were you John Celardo ?

On that "infamous" day, I was at Fort Benning, GA., nearing completion of my one-year's conscription period. At the time the news of Pearl Harbor reached me, several army buddies and I were drinking and bowling at the Post Alleys. Up to that moment, it had been a joyful weekend, for we were preparing to take Christmas leave- after which we were to be re-leased from service.

Needless to say - The best laid plans.....

John Celardo

Where were you George Evans ?

I had driven from Kulpmont, Penna., to Philadelphia, to spend the week-end with my fiancee and her family. It was near to an anniversary of the death of her aunt's husband, so, with no car of their own, they asked us to take them to the cemetary to put flowers on his grave. We didn't real-ize how appropriate a place a cemetary was for December 7, 1941 !

Not until we got back in the car and started home did I turn on the radio, then as we talked, the radio was giving out a running line like Orson Wells' thing on the invasion of Mars. I caught the words "Pearl Harbor", "Japanese attackers" -- and shushed everyone, and by God, soon enough it was clear what had happened. Inevitably, everyone started bawling, and it turned out there was ample reason for bawling--for all of us, and for every American.

George Evans

From The Crenels Of Jerry De Fuccio

Exclusively drawn for
Jerry De Fuccio

THE FANTOM OF THE FAIR BY PAUL GUSTAVSON

This redrawn sketck was done by Paul shortly before he died of pneumonia. The "Fantom" feature was from some of Paul's first art work in comics, which appeared in Amazing Mystery Funnies. Paul worked on many characters in his comic book career, including Quicksilver, The Jester, The Human Bomb, The Twister, and the dynamic Rusty Ryan and the Boyville Brigadiers.

We hope to reprint more of Paul's work in future issues of N.M.

AN INFORMAL, IN - DEPTH CONVERSATION

BURNE HOGARTH — "Tarzan" Sunday Strip, 1937-50; Hardcover Books; Founder of N. Y. School of Visual Arts.

GIL KANE — Comic Artist Supreme and one of comic art's most articulate and concerned spokesmen.

DICK HODGINS — "New York Daily News" Editorial Cartoonist; "Half Hitch" Syndicated Newspaper Strip.

BACKGROUND:

This publication is a printed copy of an episode of a one-hour program, "Ed Spiegel's Conversation at Lunch" formerly a daily feature on WPSB-FM, Bridgeport, Conn. This is the complete conversation. Only station commercials, breaks and an occasional "er, uh," or "but, but, but...", etc., have been omitted.

This was Burne Hogarth's third appearance on the program and he arranged to bring his two friends and former students, Dick Hodgins and Gil Kane. Other comic book people were guests on the show from time to time.

The moderator is Ed Spiegel, veteran radio and TV interviewer and comic book and comic art lover from way back.

SOME OF THE SUBJECTS DISCUSSED:

* E. C.
* Tarzan
* Spiderman
* Will Eisner
* Harvey Kurtzman
* Underground Comics
* Editorial Cartoons
* Comics and Mythology
* Comics as an Art Form
* Heroic Concept in Comics
* Comics: Where Do They Go From Here?
* Wertham's "Seduction of the Innocent"
* Lack of Creative Freedom in Comic Books
* Comics Purge of the 1950's and Censorship
* Adams - O'Neil "Green Lantern-Green Arrow"
* "Sgt. Rock" vs. Mauldin's "Willie and Joe"
* Comic Strip Creators Including Caniff, Foster
* Etc., Etc., Etc. . . . . read and enjoy.

NOTE: Important Messages on page 16. Take a look.

Contents Copyright 1973 by Ed Spiegel

A WORD ABOUT ED SPIEGEL.....

Ed is currently employed as sales manager of Station WMGQ and has been with the company for the last five years. Ed was a WCTC afternoon air personality and headed their copy department prior to being appointed WMGQ sales manager shortly before the station made its debut in April, 1978.

Ed's diversified background includes such work as television talk show host, professional actor, collectible comic book entrepeneur and, general manager of a Virginia Radio Station.

Ed tells us that he's never gone this long without working as a performer, but keeps his hand in with occasional freelance commercial work and community theatre participation. On stage locally, he has acted in recent productions of "That Championship Season", and "Detective Story".

Ed is single, lives in Somerset, New Jersey, and is the proud owner of one of the nation's most comprehensive record album collections of Jazz, Pop, Big Band and Show Music from the 1920s to the present.

GIL KANE

BURNE HOGARTH,

Hank Ketcham wants us to be sure and mention that Dick Hodgins, Jr. is an important member of the 'Half Hitch' crew–like Hank's Executive Officer.

Half Hitch ® **by Hank Ketcham**

ZANIKI'S FRIEND DOESN'T HAVE A DATE, DORIS. DO YOU WANT TO JOIN US?
GEE, IS HE TALL, DARK AND HANDSOME?
TELEPHONE
WILL YOU SETTLE FOR ONE OUT OF THREE?

E.S. Good afternoon and welcome to a conversation at lunch. Today's guests are Burne Hogarth, the man behind the "Tarzan" sunday strip from 1937 to 1950, founder of the N. Y. School of Visual Arts and writer-artist of the new "Tarzan" hardcover book; Gil Kane, one of the superstar artists of the comic book industry; and Dick Hodgins, who does editorial cartoons for the "N. Y. Daily News" and the popular newspaper strip, "Half Hitch." Dick, we know you draw the "Half Hitch" strip, right?

D.H. Right, I physically draw it, but it appears under the name Hank Ketcham who we know best for his "Dennis the Menace" series.

E.S. Why is it that if you draw it, and I notice you draw it more or less in his style--why does the strip bear his name instead of yours?

D.H. Well, originally it was to carry both our names, but the syndicate thought it was a better selling point to tell publishers across the country that Hank has done it again, folks. In working on that theory, we happily have 200 papers now. I can't complain. It's a successful strip that's 2 years old and continuing to grow.

E.S. Is it a common practice in comic strips for big name artists and cartoonists to sign the work of others?

D.H. Oh, I think so. It's a great work load turning out 6 dailys and a Sunday. Most people have others do the lettering and others who do inking and backgrounds. But in my case, I do it all and even though my name isn't on it, I feel very proprietory toward the character.

E.S. Burne--when you were doing Tarzan for the newspapers, were you handling the entire job yourself or were others working with you?

B.H. I did it all myself. I never had any assistants because, for one thing, I had too much pride in my own work, so that in getting out a page or dailies on some occasion when I had done that--the work had to have my stamp, otherwise I just simply couldn't put my name on it. At times, when I did pencil pages that someone else inked, I told the syndicate never to put my name on it because it simply couldn't be mine. It's a certain pride, I suppose, but Dick's right, it's a heck of a load and you can't get away from it. You've got to do it everyday and for the rest of your life if it's a successful strip.

E.S. Gil, do you have any observations on this?

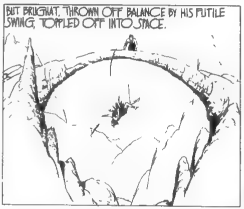
G.K. Yes. One of the things about cartooning is very much like anyother profession. There are no simple divisions because artists come into cartooning with all sorts of attitudes. Some of the artists are

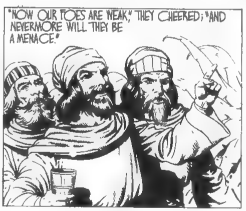
Tarzan

by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

DANGEROUS WAY

AS THE BARBARIAN SWUNG AT HIM, THE MIGHTY APE-MAN SPRANG INTO THE AIR, AND SAILED OVER THE HEAD OF HIS FOE IN A SPECTACULAR LEAP.





THEY SET OFF TOWARD A VALLEY WHICH SEEMED TO OFFER EASY PASSAGE THROUGH A MOUNTAIN BARRIER. THE VANQUISHED CLIFF DWELLERS SAW THEM AND LAUGHED. "NOW WE'LL BE REVENGED! THAT WAY LIES DEATH FOR TARZAN!"
"NEXT WEEK" = TREASURE VALLEY =

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Hogarth Art

dramatists who draw to support their dramatic thesis. For instance, Milton Caniff who does Steve Canyon. There are artists like Burne, so deeply into the drawing, the illustrating, that he has made drawing and illustrating the comic strip an art form. There are people like Dick who pick up all the contemporary techniques that run through advertising and reflect them in a highly sophisticated, highly decorative point of view. Each one of them has an entirely different point to express. However, just in terms of the work load, somebody doing a straight strip which would be a dramatic continuity, of necessity, if he were doing a daily and a Sunday in a fairly realistic style, it would be almost impossible for him to go through more than a year or two without ultimately, desperately requiring help. He'd never be able to make it.

E.S. Burne, how did you handle it all those years?

B.H. Well, Ed, I was smart enough never to get into a daily. I did Sunday only. This is also true for Harold Foster. He never wanted to commit himself to a daily and one of the reasons is that you can't really get into the saddle and ride. The problem is two-fold. One is you have to write the story, you have to pencil it, ink it and then you have to color it. If you were to do a daily, you would find yourself immediately split because it's not just a single strip during the week, but a coordinated aspect. One is the daily, the other is the Sunday. They have seperate stories and they run tandem.

E.S. I take it than that an Al Capp, for example, would not do all his own work on his daily and Sunday strips.

B.H. Oh, no. He'll have two, three and sometimes four assistants working with him including gags. I'm sure Hank Ketcham buys gags, doesn't he Dick? He doesn't sit down and knock that out himself.

D.H. Yes, he does buy gags.

B.H. But Gil can tell you the other side about comic books. There you have a completely divided situation.

G.K. Well, the comic books are really factories. The whole idea is to turn out these magazines which were originally started because they cost less to produce and sold for less than anything else on the stands and made a bigger profit than virtually anything else and there couldn't be enough of them. They used to sell three hundred million comic books a month during the middle '40's.

E.S. How does that compare with today?

G. K. They now sell about three hundred million a year. That's still a reasonable sale but still the necessity remains to grind out the formula and of course, nothing in comics succeeds like success. And in order to remain a publisher, he must have some success. There is no way he can continue publishing without having some character or book that has become world famous. And generally they build their entire line around the success of this one character and in thirty or thirty-five years there have been so many changes, virtually everywhere in comics. Now comic books are beginning to reflect those changes. Most of the old monolithic publishing houses are breaking down and they're being supplanted, for instance, by the underground press which now caters to a very distinct audience and the comic books don't seem to be able to re-tool. They're still trying to duplicate those early characters and find it very hard to see that there are enormous changes and rarely are they willing to invest the time and the money to make the adjustments and changes.

E. S. What are some of the adjustments that would be necessary?

G. K. Well frankly, I think re-tooling would be easiest if writers and artists working today were allowed to influence the material. Instead, they adhere to a thirty year old formula. But actually I think it's the entire concept of comics that's really in trouble now and the business of the art of comics is becoming a very difficult problem.

B. H. I'd like to comment. Ed, what I think we're being impressed with now is numbers and production and all the things that make comics a factory. I'd like to sidetrack that if you don't mind. My feeling about the comics is that it is an art. Sometimes we throw around figures like three hundred million...

E. S. Weren't sales always a prime factor?

B. H. Yes, in getting yourself before the public because that's how you live. In a real sense, the comics should be seen in a totally different context which is one reason why I personally would like to see the comic book, frankly, disappear and the hard cover book arise so that we can get artists with a sense of integrity over prolonged periods and at the same time produce for an expanded audience which is not just simply youngster or adolescence, but for mature people and persons in advanced age. I think we have a tremendous advantage there.

E. S. Your hardcover Tarzan book is a step in that direction. What are some of the other things that could be done to elevate the status of comic art to the public?

ON A NIGHT, LATE IN SPRING OF 1871, JAMES BUTLER HICKOK, BETTER KNOWN AS "WILD BILL", RODE OUT OF ABILENE, KANSAS. HAVING THOROUGHLY GENTLED THE TOWN, AS HE HAD HAYS CITY AND SPRINGFIELD, KANSAS BEFORE THAT, HE WAS NOW RELIEVED OF HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS TOWN MARSHAL. "WILD BILL" WAS TOO VIOLENT FOR THE NOW PEACEFUL CATTLE TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD. A 'PEACE' HE HAD BROUGHT ABOUT, AND NOW HE WAS NOT NEEDED. UNNOTICED, HE RODE HIS HORSE OUT ONTO THE BUDDING GREEN PLAINS AND INTO A FUTURE CLOUDED WITH HIS OWN SENSE OF FUTILITY AND ALIENATION. WILD BILL HICKOK WONDERED IF THERE WAS A PLACE FOR HIM ANYWHERE. IT SEEMED THAT ONCE THE JOB WAS DONE, NOBODY WANTED A...

TOWN TAMER

ART & SCRIPT - GIL KANE

J-1190

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B. H. Gil, do you have any thoughts on that?

G. K. First of all, most of the people working in comics, whether they're into comic book work or otherwise, never work up to the level of their own intelligence, taste and talent. Nearly always what they do is work that's definitely shaped to satisfy the needs, first, of an editor and then to meet general policies of a syndicate or publishing house. A lot of those tastes have been rigid and inflexible for generations and there has been enormous growth on the part of the people who do the material. As a matter of fact, a great many of them have gone on to very exciting careers outside of comics. Jules Pfeiffer is one, but there is any number of artists and writers who've become novelists and serious painters and top illustrators. The point is, Ed, as long as you work in the field of comics, you tend to be held to the level of the tastes of management.

E. S. In addition to Warlock, what strips are you doing?

G. K. I now do Spiderman as well. He's one of the top characters. And for me the strip tends to be an exercise in working out certain dramatic problems and problems of design and figurework. I enjoy that and the character is okay, but I would like to do other things.

E. S. Are you allowed lattitude to innovate or is everything pretty rigid?

G. K. It's pretty rigid. You must, to a great extent, conform to a very specific style, but it's the profession and I don't think you have much of a choice.

D. H. I want to go back and comment on Burne's book. It's a giant step forward and it's a superb thing artfully and it's a great story.

E. S. It's pretty obviously a labor of love where the person doing it, Burne, was involved with what he was doing rather than manufacturing a product.

D. H. Absolutely Ed, and we can look at it and remember it from the glorious days of the '40's. On the other hand, I brought it home and showed it to my 11 year old son and he just was totally mesmerized by the whole thing. The story, the art, the introduction, a sensational piece of art. And as you know, Ed, both Gil and I are ex-students of Burne's.

E. S. Just about everyone is. I've had other comic artists and illustrators on this program. Most of them were ex-students of the school of visual arts, founded by Burne.

B. H. Ed, that is one aspect of what Gil was talking about, artists doing other

things, but what I'd like to do now is turn the conversation into another direction. I'm sure that when Dick speaks of his strip and what he's doing, his editorial cartoons, more goes into it than just satisfying the editor. He has something in mind that deals with structure, ideas, concepts, working within his own framework of esthetic convictions. I think that that is really the artists prerogative and where he belongs and why he lives. That's true for Gil, truly one of the great people in the comic book field but I would dare say that his struggle to make those comic books is a daily one filled with all kinds of frustrations and one of the reasons is, I'm sure, that he has other things he'd like to say and do. One of the factors of the comic is we ought to admit that it is a 20th century art. It is a fine art according to substantial critics here and overseas. We should recognize that and then assert our responsibility in that direction. That's one reason for my book.

G.K. I see a lot of old movies on TV. The thing that strikes me about the old movies is that they're impossible. They are the most childish and awkwardly pulled-together pieces of writing and, often, acting, that you can ever see. Regardless of what they're saying, there is something about the movie itself, that transcends the limited aspect of the dialogue and situations. There is something about the form of the movie as it unrolls that absolutely pulls you into it and you surrender to it completely and all of a sudden you're reliving a time completely and I'm wondering why, in something like comics, there isn't a greater appreciation of the quality of say the figure work or the incredible lyricism or the brilliant comic drawings that come out. There was for awhile with, say, George Harriman on Krazy Kat, but by and large there is extraordinary work still going on everywhere and nobody ever seems to examine these drawings for their beautiful artful qualities.

E.S. For the benefit of some of our listeners who have read a lot of comic books, Gil, who are some of the comic characters you've drawn in the past and what are some of the comic book titles?

G.K. I've done virtually all at one time or another, everything from Superman to Hopalong Cassidy, all on assignment of course. I didn't create any of them. I grew up reading them, then ultimately started to draw them. I would like very much to do material of my own but not as directly related to comic books as they exist now. There is very little support for such projects.

E.S. Of the comic work you have done, what has given you the most satisfaction?

G.K. For awhile I did a character of my own called "Blackmark" It w

published in paperback and it was an original science fantasy novel. I interpolated heavy text with that because I'm not a visual purist. Text was very important to the material. I had for the first time an incredible sense of freedom. It made me totally dissatisfied with going back and taking orders and doing comic strips on consignment.

E.S. What became of "Blackmark?"

G.K. It wasn't an overwhelming success. However, it started in me a desire to get back to that and follow it through. I think it's inevitable. I think Burne's "Tarzan" book is a turning point in comic strips. We now have a prestige product turned out by a prestige publisher created by one of the most prestigious artists ever to come into comics and it is a runaway bestseller at a teriffic price creating a whole new situation for the artist.

E.S. What's the next step?

G.K. More books like it.

D.H. Right.

B.H. This is one reason we're here, not just to talk about the business of the comics, but what is the art of the comics. For instance I would suggest that the kind of art that you're doing, Dick, the humor tradition, is one of the greatest traditions in America going back all the way to the English caricaturists and satirists. You mentioned Herriman. You can also mention Cliff Starrett, Windsor McKay, Little Nemo. That tradition goes back to the English caricaturists and satirists. And what we need in this country is, well, here, let's just simply define the peculiarities of comics. Ed, I was telling you about this earlier: The comic is a very strange way, the word "comic" is a misnomer in part but it's correct on the other side because there is a kind of drawing which, whether you understand it or not, does commit itself to summoning up your sense of humor, your risibilities, your feeling of levity. There is an elevation of mood from looking at the comics. And what that does I leave to the psychologists to try to work out or maybe you can, Gil, because you're very analytical. The point is, however, in our terms, the serious comic or, if you like, the realistic comic, is more than serious or realistic. I'd say it's a kind of surreal fantasy of a kind that Bosch, Heronimous Bosch, had worked with, or even Goza, one of the greatest geniuses of the modern world who is a deep expressionist tragic figure and working in a vein today in all of the modes oscillating from one pole to the other, it seems the artist in the comics has the most variagated experience and expression of any other field in the

world currently bar none. We have a very proud tradition and a very great profession. And what we ought to do is get publishers to recognize it so that then we can get to the public who will see it and give us our proper play.

E.S. So you feel that the public would recognize and accept comics as a true art form if presented properly, as they have in the case of your "Tarzan" book.

B.H. Right, but I think they've done that with Feiffer, Saul Steinberg and Ronald Searle, who are in the great museums, and, earlier, a very great editorial cartoonist, Dick was David Lowell. And here we have it but we've not made use of it.

D.H. The cartoon and comic art are appreciated in Europe.

E.S. Dick, do you have to follow a certain political line that goes along with Daily News policy or does it reflect your own feeling as, say, Herblock does.

D.H. My political viewpoints will reflect the news at that given day. And I work within the framework of the News' political opinions and that's my job that day and I do it and I love it. The idea of going to a newspaper is very exciting to me, and going to the biggest paper in the United States makes it that much more exciting. I like the form. I like to work with the symbols and I like the response I get, too.

E.S. Do they ever turn any down because they don't go along with their editorial policy?

D.H. Certainly. Yeah, yeah, and the idea is to come up with one that does and at the same time pleases me.

E.S. Burne, when you were doing Tarzan every week, how deeply, if at all, did you get involved in the Tarzan character or identify with him?

B.H. As a matter of fact, I don't like raw meat and Tarzan never liked cooked meat. And the only time he ever ate cooked meat was when he ate elephant meat that was spoiled and he had a terrible night. I'm going to draw a story on that, by the way, in the next book. It's a remarkable Tarzan story called "The Nightmare". Back to your question--no, I'd say my identificatcn was, strictly speaking, in my head. An artist thinks in visual terms. When I read a script or have ideas, my identity is such that I'm practically swimming in the whole field of the image. Looking at the paper, it's not a blank experience for me. I can actually print it with my eyes.

E.S. When will your second"Tarzan" book be published?

B. H. It ought to be out toward the end of the year, perhaps overlapping the turn of the new year and it will be "The Jungle Tales of Tarzan".

E. S. Was that Mr. Burroughs' second "Tarzan" book?

B. H. I believe not. I think it was his fourth, but it's a sequence of stories, probably the most poetic thing that Burroughs had ever done. It deals with Tarzan's early life after he'd become an early mature individual. I find that to be one of the most fascinating periods of Tarzan because I was involved in drawing Tarzan as a grown man and I went through stages with him where not only he was young, but he had experienced tragedy and people told me I reflected that in the pictures. However, my identifying factors with that are not so much the literary element but the artistic element. When one illustrates the Bible, you cannot get into that kind of pictorial matter without getting a sense of dignity. If you lose that, you've lost the essential texture of the matter.

To speak on one level, let us say, like Milton or Dante, is to speak on the level of universals. To speak on the level, let us say, of other stories, if one speaks of certain immediate factors like Superman, you cannot speak in universals and this, by the way, lessens the tone. I feel about Tarzan that what I'm dealing with is a universal myth figure and this is where I eschew or disavow certain attitudes that may even crop up in the script, where Tarzan may smile grimly if someone is put to a certain kind of test. I find that it has to be a more ennobling experience for him to do that and so I edit in my own mind certain things that occur there and this is an esthetic consideration. What do you think, Gil, you've had thoughts in this area.

G. K. My whole feeling about the whole heroic concept in comics is that it's totally tied up with mythical archetypes, I've thought that Superman along with Tarzan.... Essentially, I don't think you could have had Superman without Tarzan, or even Tarzan without the whole concept of the Superman as Nietszche and Shaw and everyone else after that.

I thought the Superman creation like the Tarzan creation was almost inevitable. And I believe all of these super heroes that we're utilizing now are simply these mythological archetypes and it's simply the most direct way of working out a wish fulfillment, a fantasy. I've never believed in anything called the anti-hero. James Bond was supposed to be an example of an anti-hero and I thought he had the greatest integrity, he was unswerving in his loyalty.

E. S. His values were a little messed up.

G. K. Yes, but still, his values sort of reflected a great many upper middle-

class values that we have today and by and large, his feelings for mother, the crown, loyalty to his job and to his office were unimpeachable. And the same holds true with all these other characters, even the westerns. While these guys are surly and kind of rough, nevertheless, there is a kind of deep-down conviction about the job they have to do and no matter what the temptations are, they never turn their back on the job to be done and they're traditionally in the heroic mode.

B. H. Let me debate that with you for a minute. I think I'll have to disagree with you, Gil, on the anti-hero. I think that today anybody creating a hero has to create an anti-hero. I don't think that you can create a hero in the classical mold. There is no such person as a Hercules or an Apollo just strictly speaking.... As much as Hercules strangled two serpents in his bed when he was a child, a little baby, that calls for a powerful person, a great individual. Nevertheless, when Hercules goes through his labors, the labors are such that they pyramid, they start to augment and bit by bit, the gods start to recognize that and he then is given a place in the circle of the gods. He is unpraised as a demi-god. He's not a god himself, but he stands in attendance upon the gods in the upper plain of the elysian world, the olympian world. Now Tarzan is somewhat in the mold of a true archetypal hero, but he is, I believe, also an anti-hero. Who do you think are the heroes of Beckett in "Waiting for Godot?" These are true persons of the modern world. Look at the heroes of Kafka. These are persons who represent, as one writer put it, the laughter of the concentration camps. Black humor, but with the kind of thing that defeats man at the very moment when he feels he's getting an answer new questions arise. This is the key, the classic intuitive mode in which Tarzan is cast.

G. K. One of the things that occurs to me, too, though, is that the new brand of, well, again, I can't see why they're called anti-heroes because nearly always, they're transfigured by their assignments. They end up ennobled Christ figures and are total heroic archetypes. Regardless of what they start with, they are totally transfigured by their jobs, their integrity, everything else the hero is supposed to have. The whole experience is part of the hero's development, the part that Joe Campbell calls "The Rites of Passage".

B. H. No. I find it to be not true at all. "The Rites of Passage" are those that are tribal and go back to earlier states of society. We like to think that we're going through a rite of passage in confirmation or bar mitzvah rites when a young man supposedly becomes a man. That's not true, however. He's not a man at all because, first of all, in olden days, they'd have given him a quiver of arrows and a bow and say "got out and hunt.", and he did hunt, and brought back, perhaps,

the mane of a lion or the skin of a wild animal. Today, what does a child bring back? He brings back lousy marks in school and, perhaps, a drug habit. This is not exactly the kind of world that sets up the true rite of passage. One reason why young people today are having great difficulty in orienting themselves in our world is that from age 13 until 18 when they get the vote, they have no real fundamental rights as either children or adults. They're adult in power, in energy, in activity. Adult in thought including sex activity, but at that age, have no rights to exercise that judgment. When mother and dad want to go on a family vacation, do they ask a 14 year old where? He will go himself because there is no choice in the family, he is not established in the rite of passage as a mature person. So he's a freak, a hybrid, he's eccentric. Therefore, wanton activity develops. Then there's the other side of the anti-hero. In a modern context, there's Tom Joad in John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath". What happened to him? He came out of jail, tried to help his family and see a new way of life but found himself again on the other side of the law. No matter what his good intentions were, they always turned out worse. Take "Treasure of Sierra Madre". Here individuals seeking gold, riches, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. One character, played by Bruce Bennett, is escaping from somewhere, a job, he couldn't make a living, raise his family. And when he did find the gold, he got killed. These people came to a dead end. That's not the role of the hero. It may be that not even Jesus Christ who came to a dead end ever was left there, but became transfigured and resurrected as a different kind of archetypal personage. He does rise above the ordinary level beyond.

E.S. How would you classify the Fred C. Dobbs character--Bogart--in the movie?

B.H. He is the individual who sees life realistically where there is no out? Life runs out like a piece of string, constantly unravelling. Shakespeare caught it in "King Lear", where at the end when the king had lost his daughters and his crown and his kingdom, he tried with the button and that became the total pre-occupation of his world because it was something to worry about that was sufficient for him to be able to conceive. Everything was so imponderable, so inconceivable, and this is the sense of our nihilistic world, our annihilating life.

E.S. There are some things I'd like to cover with you gentlemen. One subject, ugly, dangerous censorship. This has always been an issue and remains one today as much or more than ever with pornography and so forth, but it's the censorship itself that is obscene, far more so than any pornography could be. Censorship certainly influenced the direction taken by comics. Gil, were you in comics in the '50's during the big purge?

G.K. Yes, I was.

E.S. The comic industry seemed to fall apart then. How many companies or comic houses published comics at that time?

G.K. At one point, there were about 40 companies publishing comics and now there are about 6. Of course, a lot of the fringe companies, as in any business, for instance, movies took it on the chin because of a lot of cheapie producers turning out the kind of material that gave the industry as a whole a bad name. They finally formed an association and began rating movies in an attempt to protect the product being turned out by the bigger, more responsible studios. And obviously there were a lot of well-intentioned, creative people who were doing some fine things and whose movies were intended for a highly specialized audience. It's a business as comics are a business and the first thing they have to do is protect their audience. If this means cutting back any suspect elements in the production, they're willing to do so and it becomes more and more difficult to work under the restraints imposed by the need to conform to public opinion. What's happened now is that there are now a dozen varieties of comics. There are hardcover books as witness "Tarzan" and quite a few others coming from Europe. There's the underground material which has tremendous sale in colleges and there are commercial comic books being produced for a mass audience and there are the newspaper strips. And now dramatic newspaper strips are in a great deal of difficulty. Strips like "Half Hitch" and "B.C." and other successful strips are written so much better than most of the straight strips that were created during the '30's. There's been no adjustment to those straight strips and there's really no comparison in the level of sophistication and intelligence that goes into the writing. One is done to formula and to preserve the character of a strip that was started 35 or 40 years ago, and the others are just totally in touch with current tastes.

E.S. Other media have changed, movies, radio, television, magazines and periodicals in general, but most of those strips, like Dick Tracy, stay prettly much the same.

B.H. Right and that's why I think "Terry and the Pirates" has recently been dropped because it just didn't respond to the newer picture of our times.

E.S. Regarding the purge in comic books that knocked so many comp... and people out of business and that it has never really recovered [illegible] Do you think that purge was warranted in any way?

G.K. I think a few of the publishers were excessive, certainly. They were excessive during repressive times. For instance there are movies

being produced now that would never have gotten by 20 years ago that today get a "PG" or "G" rating which means that they're okay for family fare. Those same movies, in the '50's, wouldn't even have been made because their themes are so much more sophisticated than the kind of material they were allowed to do. So you can say that some of the comic companies were ahead of the tastes of the times. A lot of what they did was truly excellent but obviously specialized. While some small portion of it was objectionable then and really indicted the entire industry for the faults of the few.

E.S. It was said at the time that comics were a major cause of juvenile crime, but when the "code" was instituted, juvenile delinquency continued to rise which indicates to me that comics were merely another whipping boy. Dr. Frederick Wertham's book called "Seduction of the Innocent" was a major factor in comics being singled out as an evil. I was a kid then and one of the all time greatest comic fans. I read his book at the time and the impression it had on my adolescent mind was that this is just a lot of bull and that the man was a complete fraud trying to make a buck or that he was an insensitive dolt with absolutely no insight into or knowledge of why kids buy comics or how comics effect us kids. Do you think he was sincere in what he was doing or just trying to sell a book that would sort of let a lot of inept parents off the hook for what their kids were doing?

G.K. So many of the people who've come out with pieces on that period... not comics alone, but all of the media, they were all threatened by this narrow, restrictive time that effected everything, television, films and books. It was obvious that those things that were most sensitive to censure would get in the neck. I think Wertham was merely a man who advocated a point of view which no longer has any support whatsoever. I haven't heard his name mentioned in about 10 years.

B.H. I think that Wertham, not knowing the man, very likely wrote his opinion in good faith. Some of the parochial critics in certain fields, like football for example. It's been upheld as promoting violence. Violence exists, however, in a larger context. There's violence everywhere. Violence for it's own sake is without value. I think that a great many of the publishers have sought profit rather than content. This is where I think the violence is bad.

E.S. This is and always has been true in all forms of entertainment and literature. But does it justify one person or a body of people setting themselves up as judges of what other people should read or see on the stage or screen, or whatever?

G.K. In comics, I think, the form is the content, very often. What we see is the only thing we can get. I don't think it would be possible to reproduce the "Superman" character out of anything except a comic book.

I don't think it could have come out of a newspaper strip or a novel or anything like that. There's something about passing a newstand even at a distance where you can't see the titles or what's going on clearly, there's still such a feeling of movement and energy on those covers that they're irresistible. That magnetism is an essential part of comics' charm. The energy that is a part of the medium is absolutely it's most attractive quality.

E.S. Maybe it's because I'm a cynical old adult now, as I remember, comic books when I was a kid, especially the E. C. comics from 1950 to '55 that were a big part of my life, were far more skillfully written and drawn than any before or since. I don't say the people were necessarily better artists, but they did seem to be doing better work at that time with those particular E.C.titles. They seemed genuinely involved with what they were doing rather than just grinding out a product. Is that so? Yes? No? What so you think?

D. H. I just learned that in the war books that E.C. put out, they did an awful lot of research. They went on submarines and in planes and did historical research.

E.S. Yes, I'll testify to that. I regularly read and collected those books and was a real buff. I remember them all very clearly. Occasionally, they'd publish a portion of one of my letters which would knock me out. One, I remember was in regard to a Korean War story entitled " Thunder Jet " written by Harvey Kurtzman and beautifully drawn by Alexander Toth. The story was typical Kurtzman, which means beautiful, but the art. The art was unique, even for E. C. Kurtzman wrote and edited E. C's two war books and is a brilliant storyteller and was an exciting innovator. No one does a war comic today, writer or artist, without borrowing from Kurtzman. His influence is on every page. E.C's war titles, "Two Fisted Tales" and "Frontline Combat", were so authentic. Yet the authenticity never got in the way of weaving a fascinating story, whether it was contemporary war, Civil War or a story about Julius Caesar, George Washington, Custer's Last Stand or anything else. I saved all the E.C. comics, but my parents mistakenly threw them out a couple years ago. The work in them holds up quite well today and I'm sure will continue to do so.

D. H. I think they took the care and had the interest in the art form to give it this added effort. It paid off. From E. C. came "Mad" and we know how successful that is.

E.S. I wasn't much into comics as an adult until May, 1972, when the E. C. Convention was held in N. Y. Imagine, holding a convention for comics that have not existed since the mid-fifties. As an old E. C. fan, nothing could keep me away. In my work in radio and TV I've

met many people at the top in world affairs--presidential candidates and so forth plus top names and talents in entertainment, music and the arts. It was part of my job and no big deal. But when I met these people, my heroes as a kid, like Kurtzman and Wood, it really knocked me out. I was really excited and I was 14 again. I was actually talking with them and participating from the floor in their panels. Hmm, I'm getting carried away. Before euphoria sets in, let's continue. Is there any hope for comics to return to those standards of writing and artwork or would that not be possible in today's comic houses. What could be done to reach and perhaps surpass those standards?

B. H. I think the form will have to be changed. You know, there's a comic book out today called "Sergeant Rock". I've seen "Sergeant Rock" and I've seen his predecessors. But none of those characters ever really touch base as did Bill Mauldin in "Willie and Joe" in the Second World War. I think one of the reasons is that the public took to Willie and Joe, not because it was the first war comic because they've been around for quite awhile. The difference is, I think, the integrity with which Mauldin did those figures and nailed down their life experiences. This is not true for Sergeant Rock. They go through the superficial aspects of having a relationship and the war is something of a backdrop. Now the biggest thing in Mauldin is that the war was not a backfrop, not just a skrim, through which or against which you saw the people acting--as you do against a phony theatrical flat. The difference is where there is integrity, depth of personality, depth of involvement, depth within the whole cultural context, is where Mauldin is great. And this is why the comic books are so empty. I find them totally vapid if you forgive me because that is where they're lacking. They don't fit the world today.

G. K. I tend to agree in part. I certainly agree about Mauldin. But he's an extraordinary figure. He's probably one of the most creative and brilliant people ever to come out of this business. He's capable of writing novels, marvelous essays, one of the great political cartoonists that the country has had. But I think the restriction of working in a factory setup really hold back creativity. When the artists and writers escape that factory setup, they do remarkable things. In terms of what must happen to get a feeling of authenticity and detail in a comic strip, Dick, for "Half Hitch", has made trips to New London, gone down in submarines, on battleships, carriers, and so on.

E. S. One wouldn't think that would be necessary for a humorous strip, but of course, it's bound to help.

D. H. Yes, the hope is that it rings true even in, as in my case, a decorative,

funny strip, as compared to a very illustrative thing. You want the characters to move in a true setting.

E.S. Burne mentioned that comic books don't relate to today. In the past, it's been tried sporadically. E.C., for example, did some things with their science fiction, war and some of their shock stories, even an occasional horror yarn. And recently Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil treated narcotics and ghetto problems and freedom in their "Green Lantern--Green Arrow" stories. I understand it died, just didn't sell and it was beautiful stuff. The one that stands out most in my mind is their story where Spiro Agnew was the school headmaster and Richard Nixon was a little girl student.

G.K. I disagree with Burne. I think that comics do reflect today and are today simply because they couldn't sell three hundred million a year, which is a remarkable audience. I'm wondering what other medium gets the attention of as many adolescents as comic books do. They surely are "today". Questioning or disagreeing with their content is an entirely different thing. Comics seem to be displacing all the other methods. The army, for instance, uses comics more and more to instruct. It seems to be the easiest way to instruct people.

E.S. Two of the most brilliant innovators in comics gone by are Will Eisner and Harvey Kurtzman. But they can't make a living in comic books today.

G.K. They don't want to--that's the difference. Harvey, who is a good friend of ours, has enormous ambitions which he's fulfilling. He wants to write. He's a very sophisticated man, a man of enormous taste that cannot be confined by the very restrictive policies of comic book publishers.

E.S. Why are they so restrictive?

G.K. Because they're dealing with a commodity that only sells for twenty cents or so. Kurtzman and Eisner would be better off with a specialized audience, as Burne does with his book. Those people won't be easily put off by any provocative material. In fact, they buy it because it's provocative to begin with. When you're dealing with a m: audience, it's a business and a business must keep on functioning in order to continue. What can you do except alter your stuff so that it's totally cut to public taste.

E.S. As you see, there are several pages of things I wanted to cover here. We'd need about three more hours, but we're nearly out of time. Where is comic art headed.

B.H. Newspapers are not making use of comics the way they did because

there are not that many newspapers. Magazines are dying. Comic books are shrinking and are for a certain restrictive audience. We've gotta get to the wider world outside and I think it's the hard-cover book in coming days. Some people have said the tape cassette, but that's verbal, not visual. It might even be television.

G.K. It doesn't have to be either/or. I think the comic book is going to flourish....

E.S. Excuse me. I must intrude. The hour has gone. Thank you. This is Ed Spiegel. Our guests have been Burne Hogarth, Gil Kane and Dick Hodgins.

So long everyone. Have a good day.

And by the way: That's it. We'd like to hear what you think. Send any comments, criticisms, cudos, rantings, ravings, raps, praise, approval, awards, money, hate mail, love mail, gifts, ideas, etc.

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